

**Inequality and Social Justice Service Learning Seminar: Hunger and Homelessness  
Spring 2010  
University of Montana**

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Course Number: 35061 – Soc 491 -1  
Day: Wednesday  
Time: 2:10 pm – 5:00 pm  
Class Location: The Poverello Center (535 Ryman Street, Missoula, MT)

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**COURSE INSTRUCTORS**

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                  & by appointment

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**TEACHING ASSISTANT**

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**COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

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## COURSE OBJECTIVES

In this service learning course, students will:

- Provide a needed service to the Poverello Center and the individuals who are served by it by working as volunteers at one of the four Poverello Center sites and conducting in-depth, loosely structured interviews of Poverello clients;
- Learn to use a form of research called “participatory action research” to both investigate and begin to address social issues. This research strategy will enhance client voice, empowerment, and engagement;
- Gain an intimate understanding of inequality and poverty, and related social justice issues. Learn to apply a sociological perspective to actual lived experiences and endeavors;
- Reflect upon what they have learned through the service experience and how these experiences relate to issues of inequality and social justice, with a special emphasis on poverty;
- Increase their understanding of what it means to be “good citizens”

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## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. For three credits, students are required to perform a minimum of 15 hours (for four credits, 20 hours) of community service. In weeks 3 through 14, students will volunteer two hours per week at one of the four Poverello Center sites. Students will be assigned to a site in week 2. Students are responsible both for arranging a volunteer schedule with Poverello Center staff, and getting themselves to and from the volunteer site each week.

2. Students must attend all classes and workshops. Those who miss a class, with the permission of one of the instructors, must make up missed material. The workshop in week 2 cannot be made up, and therefore cannot be missed. Students who miss too many classes will receive a failing grade (and thus will be advised to withdraw from class).

3. Adequate preparation for and active participation in class exercises and discussions is essential to pass this course.

a. Completing all **reading assignments** is required.

- Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (available in the UM bookstore)
- Morrell, Jessica. 2007. *Voices from the Street: Truths about Homelessness from Sisters of the Road*. Portland OR: Gray Sunshine Publishing.
- Supplemental articles will be posted on blackboard

b. Students will write weekly **fieldnotes** during Weeks 3 through 14. Fieldnotes can be informal in tone, although they must be edited carefully for grammar, spelling and other typos. Students must post their fieldnotes to the course blackboard site by noon 48 hours before class. Fieldnotes will be read by instructors, organizational partners, and occasionally by other students.

4. Students will submit a midterm paper that integrates and analyzes what they have learned in their reading, in the classroom setting, and in their service-learning placements.
5. Student taking the course for 3 credits will be responsible for conducting 3 recorded interviews with Poverello center clients and transcribing the interviews in their entirety. Students taking the course for 4 credits will be responsible for conducting and transcribing 4 interviews.
6. In small groups, students will prepare and deliver final presentations summarizing their research findings. These presentations will be reviewed by the course instructors, as well as staff and clients of the Poverello Center.
7. No student may be required to participate in a service-learning placement that creates a religious, political, or moral conflict for the student. If such a conflict arises, please discuss with one of the course instructors as soon as possible.

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## **GRADING AND ASSESSMENTS**

### Completion of Service Commitment—10% of course grade

To pass this course, students must satisfactorily complete the service component of the course. Students enrolled in this course are expected to be responsible, consistent, mature volunteers. The volunteer supervisor affiliated with this course will assess students' volunteer work, including attendance and participation.

### Fieldnotes—10% of course grade

Students will write and turn in fieldnotes in weeks 3 through 14. Fieldnotes will be reviewed by all course instructors, and will be graded on a +/- basis. While fieldnotes are reflections about the student's learning and experiences in their service-learning placements each week, students must engage with at least one concept from the week's assigned reading in their weekly fieldnotes.

### Midterm Reflection Paper—20% of course grade

Students will submit a midterm reflection paper, integrating and analyzing information and experiences from the course reading, classroom setting, and their service-learning placements. The paper will be in ASA format, a minimum of five pages in length, with appropriate references to the assigned texts (both Lister and readings posted on Blackboard). We will distribute topics and grading rubrics in the week before the paper due date.

### Interview Transcripts—20% of course grade

Transcripts should be word-for-word whenever possible, and should be free of spelling mistakes, and other typos. Students will be required to hand in electronic versions of their final transcripts to the course instructors, by week 15. Students must provide a signed consent form for each transcribed interview that they turn in.



|               |  |                          |
|---------------|--|--------------------------|
| <b>Week 3</b> | <b>What is Poverty?</b>  | <b>February 10, 2010</b> |
| In-Class:     | Lecture: What is Poverty? What is homelessness? (CW)<br>Lecture: Introduction to participatory action research (NH, NG)  |                          |
| Reading:      | Lister, "Defining Poverty" (pp. 12-36)<br>Greenwood & Levin, <u>Introduction to Action Research</u> (pp. 3-11, 76-79, 89-93, 98-99)  |                          |
| Assignment:   | Fieldnotes   |                          |
| <br>          |  |                          |
| <b>Week 4</b> | <b>Becoming a Researcher, Fieldnotes</b>   | <b>February 17, 2010</b> |
| In-Class:     | Lecture: Participatory action research & the cogenerative model (NH)<br>Discussion: Becoming a researcher (DR, CW)<br>Lecture: Exploring Our Intention in Service (NG)<br>Lecture: Writing fieldnotes (DR) |                          |
| Reading:      | Greenwood & Levin, <u>Introduction to Action Research</u> (pp. 93-98, 121-130)<br>Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, <u>Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes</u> (pp. 1-35)   |                          |
| Assignment:   | Fieldnotes   |                          |
| <br>          |  |                          |
| <b>Week 5</b> | <b>Poverty Discourses</b>  | <b>February 24, 2010</b> |
| In-Class:     | Lecture: Attitudes about poverty, the poor (CW)<br>Discussion: Qualitative research on poverty, the poor (CW, DR)<br>Exercise: Examining our attitudes about the poor (DR)                                 |                          |
| Reading:      | Lister, "Discourses of Poverty: From Othering to Respect" (pp. 99-123)<br>Hartman, "Policy Implications from the Study of the Homeless (pp. 57-76)   |                          |
| Assignment:   | Fieldnotes, brainstorm interview questions   |                          |
| <br>          |  |                          |
| <b>Week 6</b> | <b>Causes of Poverty: Dismantling of the Social Safety Net</b>   | <b>March 3, 2010</b>     |
| In-Class:     | Lecture: History of aid to the poor, dismantling social safety net (CW)<br>Exercise: Advisory committee workshop re: interview questions (NG)  |                          |
| Reading:      | Fogel, Smith & Williamson, "A Decent Home for Every Family? Housing Policy Initiatives Since the 1980s"<br>Morrell, <u>Voices from the Street</u> (pp. 1-19)   |                          |
| Assignment:   | Fieldnotes   |                          |





**Week 14**                      **Solutions to Poverty: Collective Action**                      **April 28, 2010**

In-Class:                      Lecture:    Anti-poverty action (CW)  
   Lecture:    Review main themes of the course (CW, NH, DR)  
   Exercise:  Small-group meetings to work on presentations, presentation “run-throughs”

Reading:                      Lister, “Poverty and Agency” (pp. 124-157)  
   Piven & Cloward, Poor Peoples’ Movements (pp. 271-275, 280-305)

Assignment:                      Fieldnotes, transcribe interviews, second draft of presentations

**Week 15**                      **Group Presentations**                      **May 5, 2010**

In-Class:                      Presentations to community, advisory group members, instructors, Poverello Center consumers and staff

Assignment:                      Final interview transcripts, outline of presentation